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A Frank Appraisal

The atmosphere in Washington is gloomier than at any time since the U-2 incident and the blow-up of the "summit" conference in Paris a year ago. It stems from the extensive loss of U. S. prestige in the Cuban invasion debacle, and no one in official Washington is trying to minimize or alibi the situation.

Leading the frank appraisal of the set-back to the U. S. is President Kennedy, himself. And his aides, following his lead, are talking in a straightforward manner.

The gist of the White House attitude is that the administration was misled about Cuba, that the U. S. has suffered a serious reverse in its prestige, that Castro has been made stronger in Cuba, and that the U. S. image has suffered around the world.

What to do about it, President Kennedy has made it clear that the first task in the present crisis is for all to pull together to repair the damage. But this does not mean that the mistakes will be forgotten. Somewhere along the line, Kennedy has made it known, there will be a review of just where the U. S. went wrong in the Cuban operation, and what remedial steps must be taken.

President Kennedy has already ordered a government-wide study of U. S. abilities in some of the "paramilitary" operations, under the directorship of former Army Chief of Staff Gen. Maxwell Taylor.

However, before the Cuban situation is considered closed, there will also be a specific examination of what went on in the Central Intelligence Agency that brought about the so-wrong assessment of the chances for an uprising of the Cuban people against Castro. And when this assessment comes, it will be hard and tough, pull no punches, whitewash no men or agencies.

Kennedy is determined to minimize the losses to his administration, and to arrange, if it is in his power, to make sure that it doesn't happen again.